

What is claimed is:

1. An armrest adapted to be pivotally mounted on an armrest support disposed between an adjacent pair of rear vehicle seats, the armrest comprising:

a elongated base having a frame defining a first end and a second end, an upper surface, and a padded lower surface, wherein the first end of the base is adapted to be pivotally mounted on the armrest support; and

a elongated lid having a frame defining a first end and a second end, a lower surface, and a padded upper surface, wherein the first end of the lid is pivotally mounted on the base proximate to the second end of the base for movement between a closed position and an open position, the closed position being characterized in that the lower surface of the lid overlies at least a portion of the upper surface of the base proximate to the second end of the base, and the open position being characterized by a predetermined nonzero angle defined between the lower surface of the lid and the upper surface of the base,

wherein the lower surface of the lid is defined at least in part by a video display screen.

2. The armrest of claim 1, wherein the lid pivotally supports the video display screen for pivoting movement about a generally-horizontal first screen axis when the lid is in the open position.

3. The armrest of claim 2, wherein the lid further supports the video display screen for pivoting movement about a second screen axis generally normal to the first screen axis when the lid is in the open position.

4. The armrest of claim 1, wherein the lid substantially overlies the entire upper surface of the base.

5. The armrest of claim 1, wherein movement of the lid about the second pivot axis to the open position is limited by engagement of an end portion of

the lid, proximate to the first end of the lid, with an end portion of the base, proximate to the second end of the base.

6. The armrest of claim 1, wherein the base houses a video source accessible from the upper surface of the base.

7. The armrest of claim 1, wherein the video source defines a raised portion of the upper surface of the base, and wherein the lid includes a recessed portion complementary to the raised portion of the upper surface of the base.

8. The armrest of claim 6, wherein one of the base and lid houses an infrared transmitter for transmitting audio signals to a remote infrared receiver.

9. The armrest of claim 6, wherein one of the base and lid houses an infrared receiver for receiving control signals from a remote infrared transmitter.

10. In an armrest adapted to be pivotally mounted on an armrest support disposed between an adjacent pair of rear seats of a vehicle, for movement between a deployed position characterized by presentation of a first padded surface between the respective seating surfaces of the rear seats, and a stowed position characterized by presentation of a second padded surface, the armrest including:

an elongated base having a rigid frame defining a first end and a second end opposite the first end, wherein the first end of the base is adapted to be pivotally mounted on the armrest support for movement between the deployed position and the stowed position, and wherein the base includes padding defining at least a portion of the first padded surface; and

an elongated lid having a rigid frame defining a first end and a second end opposite the first end, the lid being disposed atop the base such that an upper surface of the lid defines at least a portion of the second padded surface,

the improvement wherein the first end of the lid is pivotally mounted on the base proximate to the second end of the base, for movement about a first pivot axis between a closed position in which the lid overlies at least a portion of the base proximate to the second end of the base, and an open position in which the lid is

disposed at a predetermined nonzero angle with respect to the base, and wherein the lid includes a lower surface, the lower surface of the lid being defined at least in part by a video display screen.

11. The armrest of claim 10, wherein the base houses a video source that is electrically connected to the video display screen.

12. The armrest of claim 11, wherein the video source defines a raised portion of the upper surface of the base, and wherein the lid includes a recessed portion complementary to the raised portion of the upper surface of the base.

13. The armrest of claim 12, wherein the video source includes an exposed slot adapted to receive electronic media.

14. The armrest of claim 10, wherein the frame of the lid pivotally supports the video display screen for pivoting movement about a second pivot axis generally parallel to the first pivot axis.

15. The armrest of claim 14, wherein the frame of the lid further supports the video display screen for pivoting movement about a third pivot axis generally normal to the second pivot axis.

16. The armrest of claim 10, wherein movement of the lid about the first pivot axis to the open position is limited by engagement of an end portion of the lid, proximate to the first end of the lid, with an end portion of the base, proximate to the second end of the base.

17. The armrest of claim 10, wherein a first portion of the upper surface of the base proximate to the first end of the base is padded.

18. The armrest of claim 10, wherein the lower surface of the lid substantially overlies the entire upper surface of the base.

19. The armrest of claim 10, wherein one of the base and lid houses an infrared transmitter for transmitting audio signals to a remote infrared receiver.

20. The armrest of claim 10, wherein one of the base and lid houses an infrared receiver for receiving control signals from a remote infrared transmitter.